
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1125

Brief Description: Modifying forest fire protection assessments.

Sponsors: Representatives B. Sullivan, Kagi, McCoy, Eickmeyer, Lantz, Williams and Dickerson.

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| <p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases the Forest Fire Protection Assessments paid by forest landowners. |
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Hearing Date: 1/18/07

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Forest Fire Protection Assessments

The costs of forest fire protection are intended to be equitably shared between forest landowners and the state [RCW 76.04.167]. Owners of forest land are under an obligation to provide forest fire protection on their land to a level that provides adequate protection against the spread of fire from or across their land [RCW 76.04.600]. However, if a landowner's property is located on forest land not included within the boundaries of a rural or municipal fire district, and the landowner fails to provide adequate protection against the spread of forest fire, then the landowner must pay to the Department of Natural Resources (Department) a forest fire protection assessment (assessment) [RCW 76.04.165 & 610].

Landowners paying the assessment are billed both at a flat rate and at an additional rate according to the size of the forest land they own. All landowners must pay a flat rate assessment fee of \$14.50. This flat rate fee is paid by all forest land owners regardless of ownership size. Landowners who own more than 50 acres of forest land must pay the flat rate fee plus an additional 25 cents on each acre over the initial 50 acres [RCW 76.04.610].

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Forest Fire Advisory Board

The Forest Fire Advisory Board (Advisory Board) consists of seven members representing public and private forest landowners and other interested parties [RCW 76.04.145]. The members of the Advisory Board are appointed by the Commissioner of Public Lands and serve at the Commissioner's pleasure. The Advisory Board's authority is limited to an advisory capacity only. The Advisory Board is charged with reviewing the forest fire prevention activities of the Department and monitoring the Department's prevention assessments and expenditures.

Summary of Bill:

The forest fire protection assessment charge for forest landowners is increased. The flat fee assessment paid for the first 50 acres of forest land owned is increased from \$14.50 to \$17.50. The additional per acre assessment that applies to each acre owned over 50 acres is increased from 25 cents per acre to 27 cents per acre.

In addition, the Department may increase all assessments up to the cumulative amount of the implicit price deflator. If the Department does increase assessments, it must do so with the advice of the Advisory Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/10/07.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.